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'Well, I Was Lying . . .'

In Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s *A Thousand Days* he recounts that the Central Intelligence Agency had decided by December of 1960 on "an amphibious invasion" of Red Cuba rather than mere guerrilla harassment, and that on April 17 of 1961 some 1,400 men made the landings. But on the very day of that invasion Schlesinger told The New York Times that it was *not* an invasion, merely an exercise involving 200 or 300 men assigned to replenish the supplies of anti-Castro underground forces.

With the publication of his book this week, the Times Washington bureau quizzed Schlesinger on that singular discrepancy in the earlier statement. His response: "Did I say that? Well, I was lying. . . . I apologize for having been involved in passing along the cover story."

But the Times added a devastating kicker: "In December, 1962, in a speech before the American Historical Association, Mr. Schlesinger said that as a result of his involvement in history-making decisions in the White House, he could never 'take the testimony of journalism in such matters seriously again. [Its] relation to reality is often less than the shadows in Plato's cave.'"

Prof. Schlesinger was faced with a less rugged accounting last Sunday on television's "Meet the Press," where he was questioned as to the judgment and taste of revelations in his book concerning the haphazard Kennedy Administration. No, he replied to interrogators, he didn't see anything wrong in disclosing secret or confidential matters which he had come to know about at first, second, or third hand because of a position of trust in the White House. And yes, he was surprised at unfavor-

able reaction to his criticisms of Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

We are left about where we were. For instance, how much is Schlesinger to be trusted in his unflattering account of Rusk? In our opinion, all the way.

Rusk is an obvious nonentity. What Schlesinger overlooks, however, is that at least two Presidents in our generation started with strong secretaries of state and ended with feeble ones: FDR began with Cordell Hull but concluded with Ed Stettinius; General Eisenhower began with John Foster Dulles but concluded with Christian Herter. Both Chief Executives eventually preferred to conduct their own foreign policy; by the same token, the toleration of Dean Rusk by JFK and now LBJ is presumably accounted for by the desire of each President to run his own show overseas. (Harry Truman, whom posterity may account a better President than any of these, had three strong secretaries of state, one after the other: James F. Byrnes, George C. Marshall, Dean Acheson.)

The only warning we'd attach to the reading of Schlesinger's new book might pain him a little. It's that while he professes in *A Thousand Days* to be writing as a historian, he is perforce writing as a journalist—and a competent one. He cannot make formal history of events in which he was deeply immersed; he can only furnish the raw material of history, which is a function of journalism.

Journalists, like historians, put less weight on the secrets of politicians that politicians do. And we note finally that while Schlesinger the politico is a self-acknowledged liar, Schlesinger the journalist is probably telling the truth as he saw it.